

HIGHLIGHTS NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS COMMITTEE (NCRC) MEETING
Great Falls, Montana
April 25-27, 2006

Present:

Larry Holmes, Acting Chair, Beltsville, MD; Sharyn Alvarez, FWPM, Beltsville, MD; Mary Baumann, District Conservationist, ND; Kim Bradford, Sociologist, Greensboro, NC; Jason Bradshaw, Soil Conservationist, UT; Stephen Cashman, Soil Conservationist, Fort Kent, ME; Coleen Churchill, Assistant, ME; Thedis Crowe, Resource Conservationist, MT; Alice Love, Farm Bill Specialist, AL; Rick Tafoya, RC&D Coordinator, IA; Phuc Vu, State Design Engineer, Portland, OR; Gary Watson, District Conservationist, Hope, AR; and Rita Yarborough, Administrative Assistant, NM.

Advisors:

Pamela Boyland, Team Leader, Human Resources Management Division, Washington, DC;
Russ Mader, Natural Resources Specialist, Strategic & Performance Planning Division, Washington, DC;
Linda Varner-Mount, Director, Civil Rights Division, Beltsville, MD;

Opening

Larry Holmes welcomed the committee, and introduced Coleen Churchill, Assistant for the NCRC, Bangor, Maine and Joyce Swartzendruber, Chair for the NCRC, Bangor, Maine. Unfortunately, Joyce was called away on a family emergency and Larry will be chairing this meeting on her behalf. A letter from Joyce was passed out to the members.

Larry thanked Dave White, STC, and Thedis Crowe, DC, Montana for hosting and organizing this meeting. The NCRC is a collective working group, working together for the agency and the public. Larry reviewed the NCRC agenda.

Welcome

Dave White, STC, Montana welcomed the committee to Montana. Thedis Crowe and Lorie Valadez, Public Affairs Manager, Montana presented Montana's Outreach Plan. Montana has developed public outreach spots "Listening to the Living Land" targeting Montana's tribes. The spots are in the tribe's native language with English translation. An outreach toolkit was also developed. The kit is a briefcase on wheels that has everything you need to do a successful event; binder with programs information, sign-in sheets, markers etc.

Civil Rights Division Report

Linda Varner-Mount, Director reported on the Civil Rights Division. Linda was appointed the Director of the Civil Rights Division approximately 4 weeks ago. Linda expressed to the group why Civil Rights are important to her; she also provided a brief bio on her background with civil rights. She is working on developing training for those States that have a pattern on the same type of complaints. Her department is working on completing the State's AEP and Parity Report.

Human Resources Management Division Report

Pamela Boyland, Supervisor Employment & Classification Team reported for the Human Resources Management Division. Pamela reported on:

- The President's Management Initiative – Getting to Green.
- SMART Card, an access card that will allow federal employees access into federal agency buildings. The card will eventually contain employee information such as finger prints, position description, grade, agency of employment, etc.
- Electronic Official Personnel File (e-OPF) System - Which allows employees to access their official

personnel records on line will be implemented throughout USDA. To-date a few USDA mission areas are scheduled to pilot the e-OPF system starting 3-Qtr 2006; Valerie Smith, Employment & Classification Team, Headquarters Office is currently the NRCS representative working with the USDA Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM). When an implementation/pilot date has been established for NRCS more information will be provided.

- GS- 401 and GS- 457 Series – Issue(s) pending meeting with Office of Personnel Management and NRCS Leadership.

Human Capital Strategic Plan

The Human Capital Strategic Plan was discussed. Kevin Brown and Eloris Speight have been finalizing the draft for final review. Sharyn Alvarez will email a copy to the committee members. Committee members are asked to review and provide comments to Eloris at eloris.speight@wdc.usda.gov.

Issues/Discussion.

Issues were addressed at the Committee's meeting in December. Issues need to go through the State Civil Rights Advisory Committee Chair and approved by the State Conservationist before submitting to the National Civil Rights Committee Chair. Barbara Aflague has the Issues database. Sharyn will request the database from Barbara. An NCRC member needs to be selected to take over the responsibility of the database. This will be on the July agenda for decision.

Business Plan

The 2006 Business Plan was reviewed.

Accomplishment Reports.

Sharyn reported that the 2004 and 2005 Accomplishment Reports have been finalized and should be posted to the national web page. Mary Baumann suggested reformatting the report. She will work on reformatting and present at the next meeting.

Awards

Gary Watson reviewed the 2006 Award nominees. Gary will draft a letter to the Chief for Joyce's signature. There was discussion on who is responsible for preparing and presenting the awards. The committee suggested that Joyce work with Dana York to obtain guidance and policy on the awards procedure. The committee recommended that there be consistency on the awards presented. The Committee also suggested adding an article on the Employee Spot Light for my.nrcs when the awards have been approved.

New Advisor

Russ Mader, Management Analyst, Strategic & Performance Planning Division was welcomed to the committee. Russ will be an advisor for the committee.

The Montana Civil Rights Advisory Committee joined the meeting and was welcomed by Larry Holmes.

Outreach Course

Kim Bradford, Sociologist, Social Science Team and Sharon Nance, Outreach Course Development Team presented a preview of the NEDC "Outreach" Course that they have developed. They are hoping that the course will be available for 2006 fall curriculum. The course will be five days with lectures, interaction and marketing.

Video Library

Anna White-Bird Perales, a former NCRC member sent Rosendo a copy of the document listing videos available for loan. Sharyn will ask Anna if the committee can use it for an electronic library that the NCRC will maintain and update.

NCRC Vacancies

Alice Love will draft a letter for Joyce's signature to solicit nominations for replacement of upcoming NCRC vacancies.

Board Diversity

Addressing diversity on partner boards/councils was discussed. A subcommittee developed a fact sheet. The Fact Sheet will be updated and presented at the Summer meeting for the committee's review and recommendations.

Cultural Resources

The Committee toured the Ulm Pishkun State Park Buffalo Jump. Montana's State Archeologist, Dori Passman presented an overview on projects that NRCS has with the National Park.

Diversity

There will be an awareness training teleconference on June 6 on Sexual Orientation in Diversity. The training is for anyone interested in learning more about sexual orientation as a workplace issue. Sharon Nance will be providing the training.

Field Tours

- Hutterite Colony – non-traditional agriculture customers.
- Precision Agriculture in the Golden Triangle.
- Rocky Boy's Reservation – Irrigation and Dam Projects.